First phase of new EU import control system –ICS2– comes into operation

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The European Commission is launching its new import control system (ICS2), a major reinforcement of the Customs Union's "first line of defence" against security and safety threats posed by illicit traffic in goods across the EU's external borders.

In its first phase, ICS2 will focus on postal and express consignments coming to or through the EU by air, before eventually being applied to all modes of cargo transport.

ICS2 is the new advance cargo risk management platform at the heart of the reform of the EU's Customs Pre-arrival Safety and Security programme. It will gradually replace the existing import control system in three releases between 15 March 2021 and 1 March 2024.

Paolo Gentiloni, Commissioner for the Economy said: "Today's release will bring a step-change in the capacity of customs to help protect our citizens and the EU's internal market from wide ranging threats posed by the traffic of dangerous and illicit goods. It will help deliver a more efficient and effective risk-based approach to customs controls in our rapidly evolving supply chains, while supporting a level-playing field and facilitating legitimate trade across our external borders".

Starting this year with Release 1, the programme will progressively introduce improved supply-chain data collected by customs and new tools and processes in order to enable, for the first time, real-time collaborative risk analysis while goods are still moving through their supply chains to or through the EU. It involves a complete overhaul of the existing regime from the perspectives of IT, customs risk management and trade operations, and has been prepared in close collaboration between the Commission, Member State customs authorities and business.

Data gathered by ICS2 will also feed into ongoing work on analytics capabilities at EU level, as laid out in the EU's recent [Customs Action Plan](link). Key data links with the Schengen Information System and with Europol are also being explored to further strengthen co-operation on security risks.

ICS2 in detail

In Release 1, **express carriers and designated postal operators established in the EU** will begin providing a subset of their Entry Summary Declaration data before goods are loaded on aircraft bound for the EU. This pre-loading advance cargo information – also known as "PLACI" data – will be analysed by customs with a view to detecting immediate threats to aviation security, delivering a complementary intelligence-driven layer of consignment-level risk analysis in the context of the EU civil aviation security regime. It will involve close co-operation between customs and national competent authorities for civil aviation security.

The first release of ICS2 will in particular introduce advance cargo information for postal consignments for the first time. This will be crucial in enabling customs to address a wide range of unsafe traffic in the context of massive and growing flows of e-commerce. Whether it is weapons or narcotics, fake medicines or dangerous toys, illicit supply chains will continue to try to exploit the possibilities presented by large flows of small parcels across the globe.

Two further releases of ICS2 will complete this important reform: Release 2 is scheduled to extend these new capabilities to general air cargo in March 2023, and Release 3 will include maritime, rail and road modes of transport from 2024.